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John Birch: Beware The One-Worlders

Ever since its founding in 1958, the **John Birch Society** has campaigned against big government, high taxes and—above all—communism. It's not going to slack off just because a conservative is in the White House. President Reagan may be moving in the right direction, says society member Gary Allen, but he's taken "a 5-foot leap across a 9-foot ditch."

The society, named for a Baptist missionary and American spy who was killed in China in 1945, has widened its focus since the early days. Still headed by 82-year-old founder Robert Welch, it considers communism only one arm of a "master conspiracy" in which socialist American "insiders" are plotting to establish one-world government. Even the Administration has its share of insiders, says public-relations director John F. McManus—among them Secretary of State Alexander Haig and CIA director William Casey.

Youth Camps: To spread the word, the John Birch Society syndicates daily commentaries to 75 radio stations, publishes a newspaper column and deploys some of its 50,000 members to speak around the country. It has also set up a network of TRIM (Tax Reform Immediately) committees to inform Americans how their congressmen voted on tax bills and claims some credit for helping to defeat several liberal congressmen in the 1980 elections.

The society operates a chain of eleven summer camps for teen-agers. Along with sports, the camps offer seminars on topics such as "The United Nations—Get US Out" and "What Is Communism?" Birch officials say that at the end of each session, when counselors ask the youngsters to join the society, 75 percent usually do.

Once probably the best-known conservative organization in America, the society now shares the stage with such New Right groups as the Moral Majority. But Birchers believe that they have a deeper commitment to traditional American values than any newcomers, and that they remain a breed apart. As one member says proudly: "Not just anyone can be a Bircher."

EILEEN KEERDOJA with KIM FOLTZ
in New York and CHARLES GLASS in Boston